Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP)
Conservation Strategy (CS) Workgroup Meeting

March 19, 2007, 12:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.
Resources Agency Bldg., Room 1131

Draft Meeting Notes

Co-chairs: Walt Wadlow and Anthony Saracino

Associated documents/handouts:
- Agenda
- Handout #1: Stressor Summary (Working Draft, Stressors for Delta Smelt and Longfin Smelt by Conservation Theme)
- Handout #2: Conservation Themes and Stressors (Working Draft Table, Pelagic Fish [Delta Smelt and Longfin Smelt] Conservation Themes with Stressors, Impact Mechanisms, and Conservation Actions)
- Handout #3: CSA Elements (Working Draft Table, Elements of Preliminary Conceptual Conservation Strategy Alternatives)
- CS Workgroup Meeting Summary 2/9/07
- CS Workgroup Meeting Summary 2/26/07
- CS Workgroup Meeting Summary 3/5/07

Action Items and Key Recommendations
- Meeting Summaries from 2/9, 2/26 were adopted. Summary from 3/5 was adopted pending minor wording changes.
- Consultant will provide an example or mock-up of some draft Conservation Objectives and Conservation Strategy in order to further familiarize the Workgroup with the trajectory of this process and the type of products BDCP will produce.
- Themes/Stressors tables feedback from Workgroup to Consultants:
  - Interactions among stressors should be included in table
  - Theme 3-5, "Reduced upstream attraction flows" should include positive benefits to Delta Smelt, based on analysis by Rick Sitts and Dave Fullerton
  - Mortality due to monitoring should be included as a stressor
  - Level of certainty associated with stressors and impact mechanisms should be identified (e.g., tables could be formatted to a "Consumer Reports" style, using different circle font sizes to indicate certainty level—this approach was used by CALFED and DRERIP).
- At the next meeting Workgroup will determine process for developing draft objectives based on the current Themes and Stressors
- Fisheries agencies will look at the 5-Point Policy for regulatory definition of Biological Goals and Objectives

Meeting Summary Review and Adoption

Meeting Summaries from 2/9 and 2/26 were adopted. Meeting Summary from 3/5 will be adopted pending changes to page 2, paragraph 3, which will reflect consensus among the Workgroup members to use ecological and management-based themes as the foundation for the Conservation Strategy Alternatives (CSA's). The Summary will also reflect comfort among members with incorporating scientific research and analysis completed by other entities (e.g. CALFED, PPIC) into BDCP.

Overview of technical process for fish biologists and presentation of Draft Conservation Themes and Stressors handouts (SAIC)

Overview of technical process

To efficiently incorporate technical and scientific information into draft work products for BDCP a process was developed by SAIC and was approved by the Steering Committee. Biologists representing the fisheries agencies, PRE's and NGO's were identified by BDCP members and contacted by the Resources Agency to participate in technical sessions on an as-needed basis. The objective for this set of sessions is to complete the Draft Conservation Themes and Stressors tables for the covered fish species, which will be used in developing and winnowing the CSA's and Screening Criteria. See attached documents for lists of participants, included species, and detailed draft conservation themes, stressors, impact mechanisms, and potential conservation measures. Today's presentation covered the process through which the tables were created and their draft content. The Consultant accepted feedback on the process and current content.

The first technical session was held on 3/12 at SAIC to further develop CS work products, including Conservation Themes and Stressors tables, for relevant pelagic species (delta smelt and longfin smelt). Additional technical sessions will be held 3/19, 3/28 for and 4/4 to complete similar review for salmonids, green and white sturgeon, and Sacramento splittail.

Chuck Hanson developed draft tables in advance of the technical sessions. During the meetings, attendees reviewed each item and cell within the tables to identify uncertainties and additional relevant data/information for each species and life stage. Where uncertainties were identified footnotes were included in the tables. Feasibility and cost were not included. Magnitude and importance of impacts were also not assessed at this stage.

The tables are not considered static, but will evolve and expand based on input from Conservation Strategy Workgroup and as additional information is identified and becomes available.

Several members initially expressed concern about the transparency of the technical sessions and the process by which the documents were created. Consultants and members who had attended the technical sessions responded that the process is documented in the product: all of the relevant information that the technical experts provided is included in the tables presented today or, where uncertainty exists, in the footnotes. It was suggested

that members should caucus with their representative biologists from the technical sessions to ensure they fully understand the process and data presented in the technical sessions. By the end of the meeting, members were generally comfortable with this technical process. Parallel processes for independent science review are being developed by the Science Workgroup, which will make recommendations to the Steering Committee. They will recommend a process through which formal independent science review of BDCP products would occur and will identify the mechanism through with additional scientific research and analysis processes (e.g. DRERIP, POD, DRMS, CALFED) would be formally incorporated into BDCP. These processes are currently being incorporated informally through overlapping membership and attendance by BDCP members and consultants at other Delta science-related meetings and technical sessions.

Review of Conservation Themes and Stressors Handout
See Action Items and Recommendations for directions to consultants.

The draft tables were developed by C. Hanson independent of the current list of Draft CSA's, then reviewed by other biologists in the technical sessions. C. Hanson identified stressors and biological themes first (e.g., mortality, production, diversity), then conservation measure concepts that could address them. The themes and conservation measures will be compared and rolled up into CSA's based on priorities identified by BDCP. Conversely, it's possible to work backwards from the current draft CSA's to stressors and themes identified in these tables. Levels of certainty and comparison among measures and alternatives will occur in the next iteration of these work products and be used during screening. DRERIP conceptual models will be used where appropriate when they become available.

Questions from the Workgroup members and responses from C. Hanson et al.:
- Question: Where does fluctuating salinity fit in? Answer: Fluctuating salinity is not directly identified as a theme; it is encompassed by ecosystem variability.
- Question: Where are invasive species included? Answer: They are included under the broader heading of "non-native species."
- Question: How does annual flow fit in? Answer: The tables are based on hydrology patterns, rather than solely on annual water flow patterns.
- Question: Did you include turbidity and siltation in the tables? Answer: Both are included in the table in several places.

Other feedback:
- Some members would like to see more detailed documentation of the technical work process, particularly in identifying the relative importance of the stressors on each species and life stage.
- These tables will have to absorb new data and analysis that are being produced currently (e.g., POD, CALFED reports due out later in 2007).
- Specific literature written by DFG scientists was recommended to consultants.

Discussion about Converting Themes to Draft Conservation Objectives

The Workgroup generally agreed that it would be appropriate to begin developing draft Conservation Objectives at this stage of the CS process. They further agreed that the Conservation Themes would serve as a good foundation for developing such Objectives.

Discussion revolved around the level of data and detail required to develop adequate Objectives; some members expressed hesitation about developing Objectives right now, given the lack of detail currently in SAIC work products and need for the continued flexibility that Themes provide.

SAIC clarified that the draft Conservation Objectives that we would develop in the next couple of weeks should be explicitly differentiated from the Biological Goals and Objectives defined as a legal term of art under the USFWS and NMFS HCP 5-Point Policy.

SAIC confirmed that Biological Objectives are typically developed by the Steering Committee with background input from scientists. The Workgroup requested mock-ups or pilot set of draft Conservation Objectives be provided by SAIC (see Action Items). The Workgroup also requested an example of Biological Goals and Objectives be provided.

Public Comment

No comments were made at this meeting.

Announcements

POD science presentation is upcoming 3/22-3/23 (location and time not given)

There will be a presentation on 4/2 to the Conservation Strategy Workgroup on fluctuating salinity in Delta by Peter Moyle and Chuck Hanson.

Next Meeting

Monday, 3/26/07, same time and location. Regularly scheduled for each Monday.